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## River fouled by GE's PCBs

12/06/00

**By Michael Hill, Associated Press Writer**

FORT EDWARD, N.Y. - Andrew Esperti keeps a big "Clean up the Hudson River" banner hanging in his front yard by the riverbank. PCBs killed his mother, he says, and need to be dredged out. After decades of debate, this old mill town near the Adirondacks is divided over whether to dredge out PCBs discharged into the river, largely by General Electric Co. The controversy has heated up recently, with environmentalists holding vigils and GE conducting an anti-dredging media blitz. The reason: After marshaling evidence about the dangers of PCBs for years, the Environmental Protection Agency is expected within days to propose a Superfund cleanup of PCB "hot spots" along a 40-mile stretch of the upper Hudson. PCBs were used as insulating material in transformers and other electrical equipment before being banned by the government in 1977. GE was allowed to discharge an estimated 1.1 million pounds of PCBs into the river over a 30-year period ending in 1977. The releases were made from GE capacitor plants roughly 40 miles north of Albany in Fort Edward and neighboring Hudson Falls. A 200-mile stretch of the river down to New York City was contaminated, with the PCBs accumulating in fish and in the sediment at the bottom of the river. The EPA rejected dredging in 1984, but the agency has been reconsidering since 1990. Recent EPA studies show that PCBs - classified by the agency as a probable carcinogen - pose risks to wildlife and to people who eat fish from the Hudson. Signs posted along the river in Fort Edward's marina warn: "Do Not Possess, Remove or Eat Fish From This Water."

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